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Bach's "Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes", BWV 40

A Conductor's Analysis

by

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in

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## ABSTRACT

This essay is a discussion of Bach's cantata BWV 40 "Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes", from the point of view of a conductor, intended to aid potential performers in preparing the work. My analysis is concerned first with the text and the relationship of the form and content of the text to that of the music. Also discussed are principal figures and motives in the music and the composer's use of these elements within a formal structure. Included is some discussion of phrase structure, textural relationships and other points of interest for the potential performer. The discussion is focused primarily on the longer movements (the first, fourth, and seventh), with separate discussions of the recitatives and chorales as groups.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Review of the Literature	3
3. Overview of the Work	7
4. The Choral Fugue (Movement 1)	8
5. The Bass Aria (Movement 4)	16
6. The Tenor Aria (Movement 7)	21
7. The Recitatives (Movements 2 & 5)	29
8. The Chorales (Movements 3, 6, & 8)	34
9. Conclusion	40
10. Selected Bibliography	41
11. Selected Discography	42
12. Appendix A: Details of BWV 40	43
13. Appendix B: The Texts of BWV 40 and Translations	44





## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Overview of BWV 40's Eight Movements

7



## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Ex. 1: Mvt. 1, m.1, Cn. 1	9
Ex. 2: Mvt. 1, m. 8–9, Vln. 1 (“struggle” motive)	10
Ex. 3: Mvt. 1, m. 8–10, Cn. 1 & 2, continuo	10
Ex. 4: Mvt. 1, m. 29–31, tenor (first subject)	12
Ex. 5: Mvt. 1, m. 38–41, tenor (second subject)	12
Ex. 6: Mvt. 4, mm.17–18, bass (“höllische Schlange” motive)	17
Ex. 7: Mvt. 4, mm. 1–4, Vln. 1 (“whipping” figure)	18
Ex. 8: Mvt. 7, mm. 1–4, all parts	23
Ex. 9: Mvt. 7, m.1, basso continuo	23
Ex. 10: Mvt. 7, m.3, Oboe 1	24
Ex. 11: Mvt. 7, mm.5–7, tenor	25
Ex. 12: Mvt. 7, mm. 31–32, tenor	27
Ex. 13: Mvt. 2, m.1, tenor	30
Ex. 14: Mvt. 2, mm.11–12, tenor	31
Ex. 15: Mvt. 2, mm.8–10, tenor	31
Ex. 16: Mvt. 5, mm.9–11, full score	32
Ex. 17: Mvt. 3, mm.6–11, SATB	36
Ex. 18: Mvt. 6, mm.9–10, tenor	37



## INTRODUCTION

J.S. Bach's "Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes" is a magnificent work, having been called "one of the most perfect cantatas."<sup>1</sup> It is of medium difficulty for a high-level amateur chamber choir with soloists and players. This cantata has been performed twice by the author in the last year; the first of these performances was part of a recital in completion of a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting at the University of Alberta (26 November 2006). For that occasion, this particular work was chosen because it thematically fit into an advent and winter-themed program and corresponded with a number of other criteria. Given the intention of including a cantata by Bach as the required work with orchestra, this one was chosen partially due to its suitable length and stylistic variety. The cantata contained a fair amount of choral material; in addition to its longest and most complex movement (the opening), there were three chorale movements, somewhat unusual for a piece of this length by this composer. It was challenging but not too difficult for the group preparing for the performance, contained wind parts for which players could be procured, and its most challenging requirements—a good pair of horn players and a flexible tenor soloist—were ones that could be filled on this occasion.

Cantata BWV 40 incorporates a wide variety of styles within Bach's vocal and choral writing: a choral fugue, *secco* and *accompagnato* recitatives (for tenor and alto respectively), chorale harmonization, and two aria forms (for bass and tenor). The work was first performed at the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig, on the second day of Christmas in 1723.<sup>2</sup> In the church season, the holiday for which the cantata was composed celebrates the birth of Christ and looks forward to the New Year. The work's eight movements deal with the theological concepts of Christ's incarnation and defeat of the devil, and the resultant rejoicing of the Christian flock. These elements are explored in the first seven movements, with a New Year's prayer as the eighth movement chorale. Bach's congregation also celebrated St. Stephen's day on this Sunday,<sup>3</sup> and the scripture readings for that day are reflected in the text of the seventh movement tenor aria.

Bach set the cantata for SATB chorus; tenor, alto and bass soloists; strings, a pair each of oboes and horns, and *basso continuo*. The editors of the Hänssler edition indicate that the best interpretation of

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<sup>1</sup> W. Gillies Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach: Sacred and Secular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959): 566.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach: With their Librettos in German-English Parallel Text*. Ed./trans. Richard D. P. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*





the surviving materials is that the continuo section for the cantata's original performance included both harpsichord and organ in addition to the bassoon and stringed instruments.<sup>4</sup>

It was likely at the first performance of this cantata that Bach's Leipzig congregation first heard a liturgical composition that included the horn.<sup>5</sup> Bach calls on this instrument for both of the longest movements and also uses it as a doubling instrument in the chorales. The fact that Bach conceived a church cantata with such a colorful instrument in the Christmas season of 1723 may have to do with the fact that the first grand-scale liturgical composition opportunities at Leipzig were afforded him at precisely this time: "Bach had entered [the *Thomaskantor* post at Leipzig] in the ferial portion of the ecclesiastical year," a time with a dearth of major holidays, and therefore "he had no opportunity of showing himself in his full greatness until the beginning of the ecclesiastical year 1723—1724,"<sup>6</sup> beginning with Advent and Christmas. The horn is a fitting instrument for a musical work concerned with the main—and contrasting—themes laid out in the first movement, namely celebration of the birth of Christ, and battle between the Son of God and the devil. Of the number of brass instruments suitable for a celebrative occasion, the horn in particular would still have been associated in Bach's day with the military band, along with the oboe.<sup>7</sup> While the horn parts appear quite difficult (particularly in the case of the first horn part), Bach's writing is much more difficult for a player of a modern horn than it would have been for a player of the earlier instrument for which it was written.<sup>8</sup>

This paper will examine of a variety of aspects in Cantata BWV 40 from the point of view of the conductor, attempting to shed light on certain aspects that will aid a performer in preparing the work. The goal is to leave discussion of performance practice out of this paper, focusing on the music as it appears in the edited score (*Neue Bach Ausgabe* and Hänssler Verlag), and leaving certain elements of their further interpretation to the reader.

With this in mind, this paper will include discussion of the text as source material for composition, comparing the content and form of the text to that of the music. Particular figures and motives in the music

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<sup>4</sup> The surviving parts include two copies for keyboard instruments, "one untransposed... and one, as usual, for organ, transposed down a whole tone. It would be difficult to construe these facts in any other way than to assume that this cantata was performed with both harpsichord and organ." Reinhold Kubik, ed., *J.S. Bach: Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes*. Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Suzuki, Bach Collegium Japan, *Cantatas 15: Sleeve Notes*.

<sup>6</sup> Spitta, Phillip. *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*. Trans. Clara Bell and J.A. Fuller-Maitland. (London and New York: Dover, 1951). Vol. 3: 47. Cited by Jaroslav Pelikan, *Bach Among the Theologians* (Philadelphia, Foretress Press, 1986): 9.

<sup>7</sup> W. Murray Young, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach: An Analytical Guide* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> This issue will be discussed briefly in the context of the chorale movements, beginning on pg. 35.



will be examined, particularly in the longer movements, relating them to the text and discussing their development. Additionally, phrase structure, textural relationships in the music and other points of interest for performers will be noted.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Any study of a composer's music ought to include examination of the composer himself, and of the context in which he lived and worked. There is no shortage of material pertaining to the life and work of Bach. The first great monograph on the subject, Philip Spitta's three-volume magnum opus,<sup>9</sup> is a book with which any Bach scholar should spend time. While some of Spitta's information has been more recently updated and his view of the composer is fraught with romantic tendencies, his book constitutes an important early look at some of the original source material, considering Bach from a nineteenth-century point of view. The vast number of other worthwhile references concerned with the life and work of Bach include volumes by Schweitzer, Wolff, and Boyd.<sup>10</sup> The article in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, available in updated form online,<sup>11</sup> is also written by Christoph Wolff and is a source of reliable, up-to-date biographical information and broad interpretive information on the music itself. In addition to these secondary sources containing information on the composer's life and work, virtually the entire known (non-music) primary source material concerned with Bach has been compiled and published as *The New Bach Reader*,<sup>12</sup> which serves as an interesting, if far from comprehensive, source of information about the composer and his time.

The amount of literature pertaining to the works of Bach and their performance is staggering. However, in terms of the sacred cantatas, the amount of published study on each work varies. The composer produced approximately three hundred of these pieces in the context of his various church positions,<sup>13</sup> and even though "about two-fifths of Bach's sacred cantatas must be considered lost,"<sup>14</sup> there

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<sup>9</sup> Philip Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*. 3 Vols. Trans. Clara Bell and J.A. Fuller-Maitland (London: Dover, 1951).

<sup>10</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach*. Trans. Ernest Newman. 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1966); Christoph Wolff et al, *The New Grove Bach Family* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Malcolm Boyd, *The Master Musicians: Bach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Wolff, "Johann Sebastian Bach", Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 15 December 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

<sup>12</sup> Christoph Wolff, Ed. *The New Bach Reader* (New York: Norton, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Christoph Wolff et al, *The New Grove Bach Family* (London: Macmillan, 1983). Quoted by Jaroslav Pelikan, *Bach Among the Theologians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986): 10.

<sup>14</sup> Wolff, "Johann Sebastian Bach", Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 15 December 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.



remains a feast of repertoire for performance and scholarship. A few volumes have treated the entire body of cantatas (or of sacred cantatas), giving brief information on each work. These include volumes by W. Gillies Whittaker, Alec Robertson and Murray Young.<sup>15</sup>

While each of these has its positive attributes, by far the best book of this type is by Alfred Dürr.<sup>16</sup> It is superior to the others in both depth and accuracy. The most recent German edition appeared in 1995 as *Die Kantaten von J.S. Bach*, and it was published in 2005, translated and revised by Richard D.P. Jones, by Oxford University Press as *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach: With Their Librettos in German-English Parallel Text*. This volume provides the reader with the text of each cantata along with a relatively literal line-by-line translation of each text. The author also provides information on the date of first performance of the works, categorizes them by position in the church year, provides the scripture readings for each day and discusses the relationship of those readings to the libretti of the cantatas. He has provided the source of the libretto for each work where it is known, including the derivative sources of the chorale verses. He offers some basic descriptive information on the nature of each movement and any particularly interesting aspects specific to each cantata. The most recent edition of the book includes a comprehensive bibliography which serves as a gateway to an immense amount of material concerning the composer's life and works.

The best quick guide to any of the cantatas for a prospective performer would be to combine a reading of Dürr's translation and description with a reference to Jonathan Green's *Conductor's Guide*.<sup>17</sup> This book is far less detailed than Dürr's but includes transcription of the opening themes of each movement of each work and provides practical information such as the difficulty level of each cantata for the singers and players and the range of each vocal part. A look at Whittaker's pages on a particular cantata will prove a more useful gateway to in-depth motivic analysis than these other books, but much of the historical information has been updated by Dürr.

Involved in a decision to perform a particular work should be a consideration of the texts of the work and of the themes in that text. This is perhaps especially true in the case of the sacred cantatas of

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<sup>15</sup> Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach: Sacred and Secular*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); Robertson, *The Church Cantatas of J.S. Bach* (London: Cassell, 1972); Young, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach: An Analytical Guide* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Green, *A Conductor's Guide to the Choral-Orchestral Works of J.S. Bach* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000).





Bach, and for this purpose, there is the *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts* by Melvin Unger.<sup>18</sup> This volume provides an incredible amount of information considering the biblical sources of the specific words, and also the themes and imagery found in each line and stanza of text in each movement, in addition to a word-for-word and line-by-line translation. It can as easily serve a reader totally unfamiliar with the Bible as one well-versed in scripture. Additionally, there is Ulrich Meyer's book on the use of Biblical texts in the Bach cantatas, which provides, in German, the exact or most likely biblical sources of the wording of each text.<sup>19</sup>

Certain aspects of BWV 40 have been discussed in the context of other more topical academic work. Robert Marshall has discussed aspects of the third and sixth movement chorales ("Die Sünd macht Leid" and "Schüttle deinen Kopf und sprich", respectively) in a paper on compositional process, entitled "How J.S. Bach Composed Four-Part Chorales."<sup>20</sup> In 1991, Kathleen Maltbey's University of Cincinnati DMA dissertation, entitled "The Diversity of Contrapuntal Writing Illustrating Rigorous to Casual Application of Fugal Practices in Selected Cantatas of J.S. Bach," used the first movement of this cantata as an example of fugal composition of a type toward the casual end of the spectrum referred to in her title.<sup>21</sup>

Research completed by performers of the work is available in the form of CD/record inserts provided with a number of recordings, including those by Helmuth Rilling, Gustav Leonhardt, Ton Koopman, Masaaki Suzuki, and John Eliot Gardiner.<sup>22</sup> Of particular interest is the variety of interpretive approaches to various elements of the cantata found in these five recordings; however a discussion of this topic is obviously outside the scope of this paper.

Subscribers throughout the world, from casual music lovers to serious scholars, have contributed to the vast amount of information on the "Bach Cantatas" website,<sup>23</sup> a moderated site which even Dürr's book refers to as a valuable resource, "listing recordings with critical discussion, texts and translations,

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<sup>18</sup> Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts: An Interlinear Translation with Reference Guide to Biblical Quotations and Allusions* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Ulrich Meyer, *Biblical Quotation and Allusion in the Cantata Libretti of J. S. Bach* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Robert L. Marshall, "How J.S. Bach Composed Four-Part Chorales" (*The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 2), 198-220.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen M. Maltbey, "The Diversity of Contrapuntal Writing Illustrating Rigorous to Casual Application of Fugal Practices in Selected Cantatas of J.S. Bach" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Rilling, Bach-Collegium Stuttgart, *Cantatas BWV 38-40* ((P) 1998 by Hänssler-Verlag, Germany); Leonhardt, Leonhardt-Consort, *Das Kantatenwerk*, Cantatas BWV 39-42 ((P) 1975 by Teldec); Koopman, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and Choir, *Complete Cantatas*, vol. 8 ((P) 1998 by Erato); Suzuki, Bach Collegium Japan, *Cantatas 15* ((P) 2000 by BIS); Gardiner, Monteverdi Choir/English Baroque Soloists, *Bach Cantatas*, Vol. 14 ((P) 2005 by Soli Deo Gloria).

<sup>23</sup> [www.bach-cantatas.com](http://www.bach-cantatas.com), moderated by Aryeh Oron.



notes on the Lutheran church year, availability of scores, and much else.”<sup>24</sup> There is another excellent online resource, [www.gesangbuch.org](http://www.gesangbuch.org),<sup>25</sup> where many early Lutheran chorales have been compiled in their original form from contemporary hymnals, with English translation, and where one can find the complete texts from which chorale movements in the cantatas and other sacred works have been drawn. While all the consulted print resources on Bach and the cantatas cannot be listed here, other sources recently consulted include Eric Chafe’s *Analyzing Bach Cantatas*, Kayoung Lee’s 2005 PhD dissertation “The Role of the 12/8 Time Signature in J.S. Bach’s Sacred Vocal Music,” Jaroslav Pelikan’s *Bach Among the Theologians*, and a pair of articles by John Butt and Robert Stevenson.<sup>26</sup>

A study of performance practice inevitably shapes one’s understanding and analysis of a piece of music. While this subject area is outside the scope of this paper, recently a number of sources have been referred to recently in considering performance practice and historicity both philosophically and pragmatically, including Lawson and Stowell’s *The Historical Performance of Music: an Introduction*, Andrew Parrot’s *The Essential Bach Choir*, Kenyon et al, *Authenticity in Early Music*, and Laurence Dreyfus’ book on Bach’s use of continuo.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*, 927.

<sup>25</sup> Compiled by Rev. Richard Jordan.

<sup>26</sup> Chafe, *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Lee, “The Role of the 12/8 Time Signature in J.S. Bach’s Sacred Vocal Music” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2005); Pelikan, *Bach Among the Theologians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Butt, “Bach’s Vocal Scoring: What Can It Mean?” (*Early Music* 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), 99-107); Stevenson, “Bach’s Religious Environment: The Well Springs of Religious Emotion that Nourished the Creative Life of Protestantism’s Greatest Composer” (*The Journal of Religion* 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1950), 246-255).

<sup>27</sup> Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Parrot, *The Essential Bach Choir* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2000); Nicholas Kenyon, ed., *Authenticity in Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Dreyfus, *Bach’s Continuo group: Players and Practices in His Vocal Works* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).



## OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

Movement	Key	Type/Setting	Opening Text
1	F	Choral fugue	<i>Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes</i>
2	F-Bb	Recitativo Secco (Tenor)	<i>Das Wort ward Fleisch</i>
3	G	Chorale	<i>Die Sünd macht Leid</i>
4	D	Aria (Bass)	<i>Höllische Schlange</i>
5	Bb	Recitativo Accompagnato (Alto)	<i>Die Schlange, so im Paradis</i>
6	D	Chorale	<i>Schüttle deinen Kopf und sprich</i>
7	F	Aria (Tenor)	<i>Christenkinder, freuet euch!</i>
8	F	Chorale	<i>Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder</i>

Table 1: Overview of BWV 40's eight movements

Before discussing the movements in detail, some overall aspects of the piece and its texts should be considered. Table 1 above shows the chronological progression of the movements and their type and setting, for easy reference. The first movement consists of an elaborate *stretto* fugue flanked by parallel opening and closing sections of choral-instrumental dialogue. This movement is paralleled in some ways by the seventh movement tenor aria, which also has a quasi *da capo* form. The recitatives (movements two and five) share qualities of text expression, and the fourth movement (the bass aria) is an exciting dramatic centre for the cantata. The third, sixth, and eighth movements are chorale harmonizations with some notable aspects of text treatment and a consistent attention to the rhetorical delivery of text.

The textual material in this cantata includes a variety of types of poetry and, in the case of the first movement, prose. The text of the first movement is a single sentence taken directly from the first Epistle of John, and the chorale verses are drawn from pre-existing hymns, as was typical for Bach in the cantatas. The sources of the other texts are not known. These texts allude to a variety of biblical sources, though not heavily to the readings for the day. It is possible the libretto was composed by Bach himself.<sup>28</sup>

The following pages will include an examination first of the longer movements chronologically (the first, fourth and seventh respectively), followed by a discussion-comparison of the two recitatives,

<sup>28</sup> Young, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 43.





finishing with a discussion of the chorales as a group. In each case the first task will be to examine the text of each movement as it stands, and to consider the relationship of the form and content of the text to that of the music. The further discussion will include examination of the musical elements as they relate to each other and to the text, showing how the composer develops these relationships within a structure. Attention will also be given to textural elements and phrase structure in the music with the intention of illuminating the work for the potential performer, concentrating primarily on the longer movements with attention to elements of special interest.

## THE CHORAL FUGUE (MOVEMENT 1)

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

1 John 3:8-9<sup>29</sup>

W. G. Whittaker has written that “there are few choruses in the whole range of the cantatas which can equal in dramatic power and vivid representation the opening number of No. 40.”<sup>30</sup> The opening movement is a choral fugue, framed by non-fugal sections consisting of instrumental ritornello with homophonic choral episodes. The 28-measure opening section begins with an introductory instrumental passage that lays out much of the motivic material for the movement, followed by homophonic choral material interspersed with instrumental ritornelli with material drawn from the introduction, and finishing with a passage in which the voices and instruments come together to close the section. The central fugue section, 34 measures, is the most significant part of the movement in its complexity and length, and uses contrast between the subjects and *stretto* technique to create excitement and drive. The closing section, 18 measures, parallels the opening. Bach remembered this movement and turned back to it later in his career, parodying a large part of the first movement in the *Cum Sancto Spiritu* of the F Major Lutheran Mass, BWV 233.<sup>31</sup>

The first movement, the thematic focus of this cantata, sets a single sentence of text. The text is 1 John 3:8, which constitutes the work’s essential theological argument: *Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, dass er die Werke des Teufels zerstöre* (For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might

<sup>29</sup> All biblical quotations are taken from the Authorized Version (1611).

<sup>30</sup> Whittaker, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*, 566.

<sup>31</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*, 109.

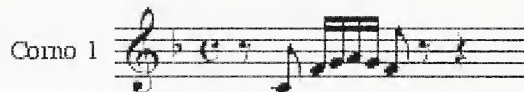


destroy the works of the devil).<sup>32</sup> This text does not come from the readings for the day, and as John Eliot Gardiner sees it, “Bach seems to have got his days wrong. Instead of using St. Matthew’s gospel for this day as his starting point, he turns to the epistle for the third day of Christmas as the basis of his cantata.”<sup>33</sup>

Each section of the first movement contains the complete text assigned to the movement, and in each case the composer treats the text's two phrases with contrasting musical material. In the opening and closing, the text is treated mostly homophonically and according to its natural speech rhythm. Melismas of any length throughout this movement occur only on the final word "zerstöre", in an increase in vocal activity to emphasize the word and a reduction of the textual density to allow the other parts to come to the foreground with contrasting material. In the central fugal section, the two fugue subjects correspond to the first and second phrases of the text, respectively. Statements of the two texts are used contrapuntally and in *stretto* to create the variety of musical textures in that section. As the two phrases of text correspond to the two fugue subjects, their interactions will be treated below as musical-textual elements.

### The Opening Section (mm. 1–28)

The first notes heard in this movement constitute one of two main instrumental motives<sup>34</sup> used throughout. It is used to evoke jubilation and, when assigned to the horn, is mixed with a feeling of militarism when considered alongside the text (ex. 1).



Ex. 1: Mvt. 1, m. 1, Corno 1

<sup>32</sup> For a full listing of the complete texts of this piece along with English translations and their sources, please see Appendix B.

<sup>33</sup> Gardiner, *Bach Cantatas* Vol. 14, Sleeve notes. Although this verse itself is not within the passages of reading for the third day of Christmas either, a glance at Dürr's book shows that the latter day focuses on the apostle John with readings from his gospel and first epistle (Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*, 121).

<sup>34</sup> "Instrumental motive" here meant as a motive first introduced in an instrumental part that does not correspond directly to any particular text.



The second instrumental motive is a three-sixteenth, two-eighth motive, appearing first in the violins, thus (ex. 2):



Ex. 2: Mvt. 1, m. 8–9, Vln. I (“struggle” motive)

The leap between the two eighth notes in this motive (which ranges in size from a third to a complete octave in the motive’s various incarnations) gives the motive its character. It stands out wherever it is found in this movement because it is the only repeated element containing disjunct intervallic motion beginning on a strong part of a beat (the leap between the two eighths). The sense of conflict suggested in the text is underlined by the contrast created by this motive (henceforth the “struggle” motive). It is used both subtly, as one dissenting voice in a dense texture, and antiphonally between two or more parts, emphasizing the feeling of conflict. When it is assigned to a vocal part, it is as part of a melismatic passage on the word “zerstöre”.

Another sound heard toward the end of both the opening and closing sections, and which also contributes to tension in the texture, first appears in the instrumental introduction: a chain of suspensions consisting of successive long notes, generally in two parts in thirds, each of which at its mid-point becomes a suspension or color note against the main harmony, thus (ex. 3):

Ex. 3: Mvt. 1, m. 8–10, Corno 1 & 2, continuo



The first twelve-measure passage of the movement is an instrumental introduction. The horns play the first instrumental motive (ex. 1), which is then heard immediately in inversion and extension. The contrasting material that follows consists of descending two-note slurs and a variety of versions of the “struggle” motive (ex. 2). The introduction comes to a close after a chain of suspensions in the horns against a quick-moving bass (ex. 3).

The measures that follow (through m. 18) consist of homophonic choral statements separated by instrumental episodes that recall material from the introduction. The text here is “Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes”, the first half of the single sentence of text assigned to the movement. The soprano melody on the first two statements of the text anticipates the first subject of the upcoming fugue, beginning with a descending C-A leap and covers the interval of a fifth between F4 and C4 in its five notes.

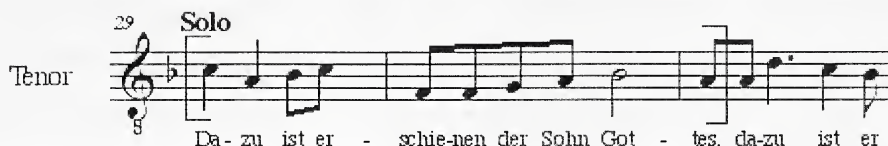
The rest of the opening section is characterized by homophonic statements of “dass er die Werke des Teufels zerstöre” in three vocal parts at a time, with statements of “Dazu ist erschienen” in the fourth voice following at a distance of two beats. This solo-statement against the otherwise homophonic material is repeated four times, passed between parts (first bass, then soprano, then back to bass, and finally alto). Throughout this passage there are a series of repetitive descending two-eighth-note slurs on changing intervals in the instrumental parts. The opening section concludes with a passage with more independence of parts: a florid 16<sup>th</sup> note passage in the bass doubled by continuo, a chain of suspensions (as presented by the horns in the introduction, shown in example 3) in soprano and tenor doubled by first violin and viola against second violin, competing “struggle” motives in the alto and oboes, ending with a coloratura passage in soprano and alto doubled by violins and oboes, as the bass and tenor have the final rhythmic statement of “werke des Teufels zerstöre.”





## The Fugue (mm. 29–62)

The fugue, as mentioned above, consists of two contrasting subjects, each of which sets half of the text. The first subject of the fugue, associated with the text “Dazu ist erschienen der sohn Gottes”, appears first in the tenor, thus (ex. 4):





Other than the first statements of each subject, the primary textural element in this fugue is *stretto*. When he uses this style of fugal composition, Bach is less concerned with showing technical mastery of contrapuntal writing, and, as Maltbey puts it, more “focused on the interpretive management and musical symbolism”<sup>36</sup> of his text. Only the initial three statements of the first subject are heard completely and without any interruption, after which every entry (of any voice, with either subject) overlaps with another entry in another voice. The composer builds up activity by either overlapping entrances of the same subject or closely layering material from both subjects. The excitement and anticipation of the *stretto* is not accompanied by rhythmic diminution, a common fugal practice, but the effect is accomplished simply by decreasing the distance between entries. Bach also gives each voice part moments of special attention, “so that every voice or instrument to which he ascribes the martial rhythms in turn stands out from the overall texture, giving vigorous endorsement to the military campaign against sin and the devil instituted with Jesus’ birth.”<sup>37</sup>

The following is an examination of the fugue in four sections, looking at the use of the two fugal subjects, the relationships between the entries of the choral voices, and the general relationship between the vocal and instrumental parts.

#### Fugue Section 1: Mm. 29—38<sup>38</sup>

The fugue begins *a cappella*<sup>39</sup> at m. 29; later the parts will be doubled and embellished by instruments. The tenor has the first entry, with a complete statement of the main subject shown in example 4. Subsequently, each voice enters in turn with the first subject material. The tenor is followed by bass (m. 31), soprano (m. 34), and alto (m. 36). After this first alto statement of the subject, rather than continuing with a further “dazu” with an upward fourth leap as the other voices have done, the alto voice immediately restates the first subject, overlapping with the beginning of the following section which consists of a succession of second subject statements.

<sup>36</sup> Maltbey, Kathleen M. *The diversity of contrapuntal writing illustrating rigorous to casual application of fugal practices in selected cantatas of J.S. Bach*. (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1990): 115.

<sup>37</sup> Gardiner, *Bach Cantatas* Vol. 14: sleeve notes.

<sup>38</sup> In cases where measure ranges of sections overlap (as is the case with the first two sections here), the point of transition from one section to the next occurs mid-measure.

<sup>39</sup> *A cappella* here (and following) not implying “no accompaniment” as in the modern sense, but used in Bach’s sense, i.e. including basso continuo but without independent instrumental parts.



## Fugue Section 2: Mm. 38–45

The following section, mm. 38–45, begins as the alto voice has the second part of this double-statement of the first subject. The tenor has the first statement of the second subject in m. 38. In this section, the doubling instruments enter alongside their respective vocal parts.<sup>40</sup> Notably, the horns are assigned only to second-subject statements throughout this section, adding power to this quicker rhythmic material rather than the more melodic first subject. Subsequent entries of the second subject occur in the alto (m. 40), soprano (m. 43 beat 2) and bass (m. 43 beat 4). It is important to note that these last two entrances are already set only two beats apart, as the proximity of entrances of new statements increases.

This section is characterized by an overlapping of material from both the first and second subjects in the vocal parts, doubled by instruments with some individual elaboration. An example of this type of doubling-elaboration is seen beginning in m. 38 between the tenor and horns. The first horn enters with the tenor on the second subject, with the second horn entering two measures later, in imitation and down a fifth, at which point the first horn, having begun the 16<sup>th</sup> note passage assigned to the tenor, breaks off from this passage with a trill in the high range and the pair of horns play complementary material that diverges from the tenor line melodically while harmonizing independently.

## Fugue Section 3: Mm. 46–52

Measures 46–52 are characterized by closely overlapping entries of the first subject; only the oboes have contrasting material inspired by the second subject. Throughout this section the voice parts are doubled by the strings, verbatim in the upper parts, with the bass part filled in with runs of 16<sup>th</sup> notes in the continuo. At the second entries, the horns add to the doubling of the two highest voice parts. Beginning at the upbeat to m. 46, the entries are evenly spaced at every second beat, beginning with alto and progressing as follows: tenor (m. 46 beat 2), bass (m. 46 beat 4), soprano (m. 47 beat 2), alto (m. 47 beat 4), tenor (m. 48 beat 2), bass (m. 48 beat 4), and soprano (m. 49 beat 2). Here the pattern breaks, with no further entry at a two-beat interval, anticipating the end of a main section or some point of repose, but this is simply a delay of the true climactic entry, which occurs after *six* beats: here a tenor statement of the subject in retrograde, starting

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<sup>40</sup> Second violin and oboes with alto, viola and first horn with tenor, first violin and oboe with soprano. The bass is doubled and embellished in the continuo.



with a powerful leap up to G4 (beginning at the upbeat to m. 51), keeps the momentum going into the final section.

#### Fugue Section 4: Mm. 52—62

The final section of the fugue, mm. 52—62, is marked by a forceful return of the second subject, first stated homophonically in tenor and bass, amid a new statement of the first subject in the alto harmonized (mostly at the tenth) by the soprano. The next entrances combine the two subjects: the soprano has the first subject in m. 55, followed by second-subject entries in the alto and tenor in m. 56, and finally bass on the first subject again, in m. 58. This is the last main vocal entry of the section, at which point the parts begin to pair up in text and rhythm: soprano and alto on second-subject material in m. 59, and tenor and bass on a variant of the same material in m. 60. The lower three vocal parts have a final statement of “die Werke des Teufels zerstöre” (m. 61—62), coming to a cadence in B flat major on the third beat of m. 62 with the soprano which is finishing a coloratura passage on the same word.

#### The Closing Section (mm. 62—80)

The closing section of this movement begins simultaneously with the final beat of the fugue, on the third beat of m. 62. At this moment, the strings bring back the opening motive of the movement (ex. 1), now set in the subdominant and on the opposite strong beat (beginning on beat 3 rather than 1). This motive is now played by the strings (the melody in the first violin) rather than by the horns, with the answering material also in the strings, doubled by the oboes. The assignment of instruments to parts is quite different from the opening choral entrance, but the parts themselves and the overall plan are much the same. The choir again begins with homophonic episodic material alternating and overlapping with instrumental episodes consisting of contrasting material taken from the opening instrumental passage.

Measures 70—80, the end of the movement, parallel mm. 19—28, the end of the opening section of the movement. The first part of the passage, like the parallel place in the opening, consists of three-part homophonic choral statements of “dass er die Werke” with single-voice echoes of “Dazu ist erschienen” (now passed between only bass and soprano), with repetitive descending two-note slurs on changing intervals in the orchestra parts. The conclusion of the section, parallel to that of the opening, has more





independence of parts: a 16<sup>th</sup> note passage in the bass and continuo, and a chain of suspensions in the soprano and alto doubled by the horns (in the opening, this was given to soprano and tenor and doubled by violins). Now the violins and tenor have competing versions of the “struggle” motive (ex. 2), as the oboes and violas play punctuating eighth notes. The movement ends, as in the opening section, with harmonizing coloratura passages in soprano and alto doubled by violins and oboes, as bass and tenor have the final statement of “werke des Teufels zerstöre”.

#### THE BASS ARIA (MOVEMENT 4)

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Genesis 3:15

In this “wide-ranging and operatic”<sup>41</sup> aria for bass with strings, oboes and continuo, the soloist addresses the devil directly: “Höllische Schlange, wird dir nicht bange?” (Hellish Serpent, are you not afraid?). It is an aria of “full-blooded drama”<sup>42</sup> with quick tempo, instrumental “whipping” figures and bits of coloratura in the low register. These are very dramatic devices for liturgical music, which in this case bears some resemblance to the baroque operatic bass *rage aria*, where “vehement emotions are expressed in angular, wide-leaping lines.”<sup>43</sup> However, the sentiment is tempered somewhat by echoing effects in the oboes and the feeling of dance brought about by the 3/8 time signature and regular short phrase lengths. The result is a mixture of stern defiance and carefree celebration, thematically linking this movement with the first.

*Höllische Schlange,  
Wird dir nicht bange?  
Der dir den Kopf als ein Sieger zerknickt,  
Ist nun geboren,  
Und die verloren  
Werden mit ewigen Frieden beglückt.*

Hellish Serpent,  
Are you not afraid?  
The one who as a victor crushes your head  
Has now been born,  
And the lost  
Will be made happy with everlasting peace.

<sup>41</sup> Suzuki, Bach Collegium Japan, *Cantatas 15*: Sleeve notes.

<sup>42</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 110.

<sup>43</sup> Owen Jander et al, “Bass”, Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 20 March 2007), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.



The text consists of 6 lines in total, divisible into two, three-line sections, each consisting of two short lines (of five syllables) and a final long line (of ten syllables). The rhyme scheme is AAB CCB. The musical setting treats the text in two sections: the first is just under half of the total length of the movement (the first 52 mm.) and sets the first two lines of text: “Höllische Schlange, wird dir nicht bange?” The second section of the movement (69 mm.) sets the remainder of the text. It is worth noting that the composer has not divided the text into the two sections into which it falls according to its rhyme and meter, but according to a more rhetorical style, separating it into an initial query followed by a long statement.

The opening section uses repeated statements, in order and in reverse, of the first two lines of text, with many repetitions of the words “Schlange” and “bange”. These are both evocative words with a heavy emphasis on the first syllable, and are paralleled in Bach’s setting by an instrumental figure of a two-note slur (generally descending) on the first two beats of the bar. The second section sets the remainder of the text twice completely with some internal repetitions. The text most repeated is “Der dir den Kopf als ein Sieger zerknickt” (He who as a conqueror crushes your head). Other emphasized words include “geboren” of “ist nun geboren” (has now been born), the only single word assigned a coloratura passage (mm. 86–87), and “ewigem” (eternal or everlasting), assigned—as is idiomatic for Bach—to a held pedal note in the vocal part.

Two elements heard at the very beginning of the movement are used throughout. The first of these elements corresponds to the first two lines of text in the soloist’s part. This rhythmic motive corresponds to the text “Höllische Schlange” (ex. 6). It is also used (although not always) for “wird dir nicht bange”.



Ex. 6: Mvt. 4, mm. 17–18, bass (“Höllische Schlange” motive)

The instrumental material throughout the movement is made up almost entirely of either this motive or another figure: a six-sixteenth note pattern with a combination of three stepwise notes followed by leaps in a circular motion, perhaps indicative of the whipping of the serpent’s tail. In this figure (henceforth the



“whipping” figure), the first three notes always consist of a step to and from a lower neighboring note, and the leap-wise notes arpeggiate the changing harmony (ex. 7):



Ex. 7: Mvt. 4, mm. 1–4, Vln. I (“whipping” figures)

The regularity of the short phrase lengths throughout the movement provides an element of dance and a straightforward lyricism that balances the effect of the strong rhythmic elements. It is set up in four-bar phrases, generally in a larger (2+2)+4 pattern, and in some cases, a (2+2)+(2+2)+4 pattern. This regularity of phrasing is only interrupted once, by one inserted bar, in a device that gives excitement to the climax at the end of the aria (which will be examined further below).

At the opening of this movement, Bach again uses an introductory instrumental passage to state the main musical material, from which later instrumental episodes will be drawn. In this movement as well as in the upcoming tenor aria, Bach uses a compositional style common for cantata arias with instrumental obbligati, in which “the opening ritornello in particular... possesses more than a mere articulating function, for within it the thematic material is stated which is then developed in the vocal passages.”<sup>44</sup> Also important in this style is the “virtual equality of voice and instrument,” and the use of the ritornello theme at the first vocal entry.<sup>45</sup> The first violin plays “whipping” figures (shown in ex. 7) while the oboes and other strings play the “Höllische Schlange” motive (as in ex. 6). The 16-measure opening consists of two eight-measure (2+2)+4 phrases, each containing two repetitions of the two-measure “Höllische Schlange” motive followed by an extended four-measure version similar to the material given to the soloist in the parallel place in the following passage.

The vocal entrance is in m. 17, beginning an eight-measure passage consisting of the first statement of the text over four measures (“Höllische Schlange, wird dir nicht bange”, in (2+2) measures), followed by a four-measure instrumental episode. This eight-measure passage structurally parallels the first eight measures of the instrumental introduction, with the first violins playing “whipping” figures as the

<sup>44</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 18.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



remainder of the players play the “Höllische Schlange” motive. Again, the pattern is (2+2)+4. The next eight-measure passage is similar, also with a (2+2)+4 phrase structure, but with the soloist present through the second four-measure phrase as well as the first.

At m. 34, Bach appends an additional four-measure passage to the beginning of a typical (2+2)+4 phrase for a total phrase length of twelve measures in a (2+2)+(2+2)+4 pattern. In the initial four measures of this phrase, the vocal part is similar to before, but the continuo, lower strings and second oboe only punctuate with pairs of eighth notes on the second and fourth measure downbeats (that is, accompanying just the word “Schlange”, and not the complete phrase “Höllische Schlange”). The first violins continue to play “whipping” figures, and the first oboe plays the full “Höllische Schlange” motive, echoing the soloist at a distance of one measure. After this longer phrase, the section comes to a close with a (2+2)+4 measure passage (m. 45–52). It is an instrumental ritornello that parallels the initial introduction; this time the passage is heard in the minor dominant key and with increased ornamentation.

The second section of the movement, beginning at m. 53, is characterized by disjunct intervallic motion over chromatic harmonies in the vocal part to paint the text of “zerknickt!” (crushed). The full text is repeated twice, giving this section two sub-sections. Beginning at m. 53, the soloist has the text “Der dir den Kopf...”. The first phrase of this section provides contrast with the previous section both by means of new text and by a new phrase structure: the first eight-measure phrase in a 4+4 measure pattern. There is also a new change of texture, in which for the first time the first violins do not play the “whipping” figures. This element is here passed to the continuo, the quick motion in this low range resulting in a growling, rumbling effect. The remainder of the players punctuate with slurred pairs of eighths (recalling “Schlange” and “bange” from the first section), with the first oboe playing the full “Höllische Schlange” motive. This motive anticipates the vocal line where in the previous section it was an echo, perhaps significantly related to the forward-looking theme of the text: “und die verloren werden...beglückt” (and the lost *will be* made happy...).).

In the following eight-measure phrase (beginning at m. 61), the composer returns to the earlier phrase structure—(2+2)+4—and texture (the violins again have the “whipping” figures, the remaining instruments playing the “Höllische Schlange” motive). In this phrase, the new element is the addition of the first oboe echoing the voice, now with the text “Ist nun geboren, und die verloren” (is now born, and the





lost) on the familiar rhythm of the “Höllische Schlange” motive (ex. 6). Bach’s decision to use the same rhythm for metrically parallel texts is in keeping with the dance-like, 3/8 feel of the movement. This phrase, and with it the first complete statement of the text, concludes with “werden mit ewigen Frieden beglückt” (will be made happy with everlasting peace). The first coloratura passage of the movement is heard on this text, the soloist getting carried away with the thought of the everlasting happiness of which he speaks.

The last passage of the first part of this section, mm. 69–76, consists of an instrumental ritornello parallel to the opening. It is now heard in the subdominant key (G minor) and with ornamentation closely related to the passage that concluded the opening section. This time the oboes and first violin cadence with upward motion high in the range.

Measure 77 begins a second sub-section of the movement’s larger second section. It consists of a new statement of the “Der dir den Kopf” text. Bach now underlines the urgency in the text by adding punctuating rhythms in the strings over the “whipping” figure in the basses. The leaps in the vocal part become larger, the harmony more chromatic, and the phrase structure is extended to  $(4+4)+4$ . The final four of these measures include a two-measure coloratura passage on the word “geboren”—the longest such passage in this aria. In the rage aria vein, at the climax the soloist gives the most vocal attention to the word most frightening to the recipient of his warning: “the one who... crushes your head has now been *born*”. The following passage beginning at m. 89, is a  $(2+2)+4$  measure phrase, with a double statement of “und die verloren”, continuing the elongation of the text setting in this second statement.

The structure of the final vocal passage, mm. 97–106, is unique. Beginning at m. 97, the instruments are given a typical eight-measure ritornello passage (now in the dominant), followed by a single bar of rest in all parts but the continuo before continuing into the final ritornello. However, the vocal part follows a different phrase structure: the first four measures consist of a held dominant note (on the word “ewigem”) followed by a 6-measure passage which appends a two-measure insertion of “Frieden” to a typical four-measure passage measure (a final statement of “werden mit ewigem Frieden beglückt”) ending at the downbeat of the fourth measure. In parallel places elsewhere in the movement, the remainder of this measure consists of rests in most parts and anticipatory upbeat material in the first violins coming into a new phrase in the following measure. Here however, the  $(2+2)+4+1$  phrase structure in the instrumental parts imposed over the  $4+(2+4)$  structure of the vocal part results in the *forte* downbeat in the



instrumental parts (beginning the final ritornello section of the movement) coinciding with the final cadence in the vocal part. This has the effect of making the players sound early with their entrance, emphasizing the finality of the last cadence in the vocal part and giving drive and urgency to the concluding ritornello of the movement. The lengthened structure of the first six bars of this passage in the voice, and the superimposing of this passage over an instrumental passage of standard structure, also gives the listener increased awareness of the attention Bach has given to the final statements of “ewigem” and “Frieden”. The concluding ritornello consists of 16 measures and is identical to the parallel passage at the opening of the movement.

## THE TENOR ARIA (MOVEMENT 7)

“...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings...”

Matthew 23:37

The seventh movement of Cantata 40, the tenor aria “Christenkinder, freuet euch” (Children of Christ, rejoice), is set to the accompaniment of only the winds and continuo. It relates thematically, both textually and in its music, to the opening movement, “recalling [that movement’s] festive character... in its wind scoring, its triadic melody, and the subdominant twist of its vocal entry.”<sup>46</sup> It is brilliant and virtuosic, full of coloratura passages for the soloist that use the full range of the tenor voice. It is also demanding for the wind players, particularly for the first horn.

*Christenkinder, freuet euch!  
Wütet schon das Höllenreich,  
Will euch Satans Grimm erschrecken:  
Jesus, der erretten kann,  
Nimmt sich seiner Küchlein an  
Und will sie mit Flügeln decken.*

Children of Christ, rejoice!  
The kingdom of hell now rages,  
Satan’s fury wants to frighten you:  
Jesus, who can rescue you,  
Takes care of his little chicks,  
And wants to cover them with his wings.

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<sup>46</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 110.



This text is the only part of the libretto that refers to the St. Stephen's Day readings: the gospel reading for the day would have been Matthew 23:34–39, which includes the verse above. This text, as it stands, has certain things in common with that of the bass aria: it is in six lines, in an AAB CCB rhyme scheme with the third and sixth lines being longer. In his setting, Bach again groups the lines of text into two sections not with priority to the balanced rhyme and meter of the poetry, but in recognition of the different types of expression in the text, treating the initial imperative exclamation (the first line) repetitively in a section unto itself, followed by a middle section incorporating the more explanatory and expansive text beginning with the second line: “Wütet schon das Hölle Reich...” (The kingdom of Hell now rages...). The movement is in a modified *da capo* form, with a second “Christenkinder, freuet euch” section at the end.

The opening and closing sections each contain 19 measures, with a 15-measure central section. The outer sections each contain several statements of the first line of text, each statement including a coloratura passage on the word “freuet” (“rejoice”). Each of these coloratura passages is slightly different, with the penultimate statement of the text in each section having the longest coloratura passage, preceding a shorter final closing statement. The middle section of the movement, treating much more text over fewer measures, contains two sequential settings of its portion of text (lines 2–6). The second of these settings has more vocal ornamentation and elaboration in a thinner texture. The opening and closing sections are each composed of 19 measures, but with very different phrase structures (the opening is 4+4+2+4+3+2 measures,<sup>47</sup> whereas the final section is 3+4+4+3+4). This fewer number of phrases in the closing section coupled with a more consistent phrase length reflects the increased vocal elaboration and complexity of that section over the first. However, the elements from which the phrases are constructed are very similar, with some reassignment of elements between the instrumental parts, and from the vocal line to one or another of the instruments and vice-versa.

After the initial downbeat, each phrase in this movement begins on the second beat of a measure, with the syllabic and musical accent consistently placed on the second and fourth beats of the measure. Certainly the typical hierarchy of beats does not apply so strongly in this movement, particularly where the difference between strong and weak halves of the measure are concerned. It is possible that the composer's use of the 12/8 time signature here, rather than 3/8 or 6/8, is for the consideration of tempo (slow enough

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<sup>47</sup> Each of these phrases begins on the second beat of a 12/8 measure and end on a downbeat.



for the soloist to manage the coloratura passages) rather than an indication that the movement be felt “in four”.

There are a number of important motivic elements in this movement, many of which occur in the first few measures (ex. 8). The first important melodic motive is the initial melody heard in all wind parts, outlining an F major arpeggio. The opening horn call and the first vocal entrance both begin with this motive. This is also the only melodic motive incorporating several consecutive eighth notes.

Ex. 8: Mvt. 7, m. 1–4, wind parts

A figure from which many of the vocal coloratura passages and florid passages in the accompaniment are generated is heard on the first beat of the movement, in the continuo (ex. 9):

Ex. 9: Mvt. 7, m. 1, basso continuo





Taking from this figure the basic element of 16<sup>th</sup> notes in stepping motion of a third away from and back to an initial note (treating the lower neighbor motion that ends this example as elaborative), we can see much of the material in the rest of this movement as somehow related. This neighbor motion at the end of the beat (as in ex. 9) is often used in the vocal part where the line is continuing. Example 8 shows a variety of other versions: this same figure in inversion in the first horn (m. 1), ending with an eighth note (second horn, m. 2), and this same pattern in inversion (first horn in m. 2).

Another important melodic motive is the following, heard first in the first oboe in the third measure (ex. 10):



Ex. 10: Mvt. 7, m. 3, Oboe 1, “trill” motive

This pattern of a single eighth note followed by a trill on the same note with an upward turned ending (usually going into a florid passage similar to that appearing above), is used primarily in the winds, but in the climax of the movement is used in the vocal part as well (henceforth the “trill” motive).

Aspects to note in this movement include the qualities of the vocal line and its phrase structure, as well as the interaction between the solo line and the other parts in the texture, looking at how the composer sets the text and comparing and contrasting the sections of the movement.

As in the first and fourth movements, this aria opens with an instrumental passage that lays out much of the musical material for the movement. Again, the first melodic element heard in the introduction will also serve as the initial melodic element at the vocal entry. Other elements in the introduction will later be used in the vocal part and serve as ritornello material in the instrumental episodes that mark the divisions of sections.

On the first beat, the continuo is given the figure shown in example 9. After the first beat, the continuo rests as the first horn enters on the second beat, the second horn on the third, the oboes on the upbeat to the second measure (all of these outlining an F major arpeggio, a horn-call effect), with the continuo re-entering on the first beat of the second measure. In the second measure, we hear the horns and



oboes, in pairs, in alternation with each other (see ex. 8). The horns play in thirds on the first and third beats; they have 16<sup>th</sup> note material outlining the interval of a third (drawn from the figure in example 9). The oboes play on the second and fourth beats; the two parts are in thirds on three slurred neighboring eighth notes, a figure that will also be frequently employed in the accompaniment. On the third beat of the second measure we first hear the third main motive, the “trill” motive (shown in ex. 10), heard in harmony in the oboes, while the first horn plays a florid 16<sup>th</sup> note passage that will be used many more times in one or another of the voices throughout the movement. The second horn punctuates with static eighth notes.

Measures 3–4 comprise a motivic-textural unit repeated a number of times in this movement: two voices with the “trill” motive in thirds, one voice a passage similar to that here heard in the horn, and one voice playing static punctuating eighth notes. This two-measure motivic/textural unit is used in some form in mm. 9–10, 16–17, 18–19, 27–28, 48–49 and at the very end of the movement, in mm. 52–54.

On the second beat of the fifth measure, the tenor soloist enters. The initial motive is the arpeggiating figure heard in the opening, followed by a melodic motive that will be used again and again on the words “freuet euch” (rejoice) (ex. 11):



Ex. 11: Mvt. 7, mm. 5–6, tenor

This melodic figure is then passed to the oboes (beat 1 of m. 6), repeated by the soloist (as shown, on beat 2), and again echoed by the horns (beat 3), extending into a long coloratura passage for the soloist. This passage and the others like it are basically comprised of a sequence of figures drawn from the initial continuo figure (ex. 9). Beat-groups move stepwise to a third away from an initial note, leap the third back to the same note, then leap or step up or down to begin a new beat-group. The accompaniment through this initial passage consists of punctuating eighth notes with the “trill” motive (ex. 10) passed between oboe and horn.

Following this passage, which ends at the downbeat of the ninth measure, there is a two-measure ritornello that parallels the third and fourth measures of the opening. This is followed by another vocal entrance, on the second beat of m. 11, beginning a second vocal passage that greatly resembles the first,



altered in some ways: first a fairly syllabic statement (barring the flourish on “freuet”), then again a coloratura passage on “freuet”, constructed similarly to the first passage but with more leaping motion in the line. The run is longer, too (by two beats), and progresses through an upward-bound melodic sequence, ending higher in the range (ascending to a G5 on the penultimate note). The accompaniment through this passage consists of alternations between horns and oboes of the type first heard in mm. 2–3 (shown in ex. 8). At the downbeat of the 15<sup>th</sup> measure, the soloist is afforded only an eighth rest before another coloratura passage, which begins with a leaping figure on “Christenkinder”, similar to the first vocal entry, ascending to an A4 and continuing in this range before descending to a cadence in the dominant key. Following this, there is a two-measure ritornello which closes the first section, keeping it in the dominant key to set up the contrasting middle section.

The central section of the movement contrasts with the opening. This section is comprised generally of shorter phrase lengths, with only one four-measure phrase, the overall structure being (2+2)+3+2+3+4 measures. Thematically, the central section gives reasoning behind the rejoicing solicited in the opening section, referring to the designs of hell and Satan and the protection offered by Christ. The main differences between this section and the previous one include the density of the texture, the type of vocal writing, and the role assigned to the continuo.

For the most part, this section has a light texture compared to the opening and closing sections. The winds mostly do not overlap with the vocal line, and when they do it is in an accompaniment role rather than in a role that competes with the voice. For the second part of the section (the second statement of the text), the winds drop out completely and the singer is accompanied by continuo only. John Eliot Gardiner’s reference to the autograph score suggests that Bach added this second statement after rehearsing the work, perhaps for the benefit of the wind players: “these [six measures] are squashed in at the foot of the page to give them, rather than the tenor, time to catch their breath before the *da capo*.”<sup>48</sup>

While there is still a fair amount of melismatic writing for the voice in this middle section, the passages are not as long as in the previous section (with the exception of the final phrase) and there is a far greater amount of syllabic writing. This reflects the composer’s decision to assign most of the text for the movement to this section. The longest melismatic passages (again, with the exception of the final phrase)

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<sup>48</sup> Gardiner, *Bach Cantatas* Vol. 14, 2005: Sleeve notes.



are assigned to the word “erschrecken” (“frighten”), the most evocative word in this text, and one which the composer treats very differently between the two repetitions of the text. The first time it is heard, the word is assigned to the high range on a florid passage over a diminished chord, evoking in a natural way the frightened feeling it describes. For the second statement of the text, it is assigned mid-range, in a halting manner with staccato and rests (ex. 12), lending itself to a variety of potential interpretations; the emotion expressed here could be a sort of halting dread of the devil, or perhaps even poking fun at its subject, as quasi-laughter.



In the opening and closing of this movement, the basso continuo line consists mostly of basic arpeggiation and stepwise motion throughout, with a few short 16<sup>th</sup> note passages and brief moments of syncopation but mostly serving a harmonic accompaniment function. In the middle section, however, the continuo plays a much more active part in painting the text, serving perhaps to illustrate the simmering of hell referred to in the text when given a rhythmic pedal point under the running wind parts in response to “Wütet schon das Höllenreich” (m. 21), and under the vocal part on the first “erschrecken” (m. 23). In the second part of the section, the continuo alone accompanies the voice, in this capacity playing a more complex harmonic and counter-melodic part than anywhere else in the movement.

Interestingly, the beginning of the *da capo* is set up very differently from the beginning of the movement itself. Following a perfect cadence in the subdominant key at m. 36 and a *tutti* rest to end the middle section, the horns do not enter with the arpeggiating material of the main theme, as at the beginning, but the solo tenor enters alone. The *tutti* rest gives a moment of uncertainty which continues as the voice enters without a harmonic framework. The winds enter a full measure after the vocal entry, with a verbatim repeat of the initial two measures of the movement (shown in ex. 8), in an echo effect that harmonizes and embellishes the vocal line. After his initial statement, the soloist re-enters in the third measure after the winds have begun, rather than after four measures as in the opening. Bach leaves out the original ritornello from the third and fourth measures of the opening, putting the winds into accompaniment mode at the vocal





entry in a reconfiguration of the opening that compensates for the change of the vocal entrance at the *da capo*.

The subsequent passage, beginning in m. 39, parallels mm. 5–9 of the opening, the only difference between the two being a reassignment of the order of echoes: the horns now precede the oboes. After this four-measure statement, Bach does not insert an instrumental ritornello as in the opening, but has the soloist present new material, this time in the form of the “trill” motive (ex. 10) on the word “freuet”. This motive ascends to an A4 before a lengthy coloratura passage, the longest of the movement (beginning in m. 44). This passage also increases in range as it continues, ending with a series of three repeated high A’s; however, the composer, presumably realizing the needs of the soloist, has provided one place in the line with a descending arpeggio on eighth notes, giving the singer a place to catch a breath. The accompaniment through this passage is the alternating wind material first found in m. 2 of the opening. The final three measures for the soloist consist of a final 16<sup>th</sup> note passage (again, after only an eighth rest following the previous passage!), ending with a descending line that cadences in F major. The downbeat here marks the beginning of an exact repeat of the opening five bars of the movement, with the successive wind entries and final ritornello giving the last statements of all the motivic material first stated there.

Despite the liturgical nature of this cantata, there is certainly a relaxation of mood in this aria, a piece Bach clearly conceived for an excellent soloist. This is an almost operatic number in the vein of the masters of the Neapolitan school—“elaborate, sophisticated, almost bravura-like—in which the singer could show his or her capabilities in their true light.”<sup>49</sup> Bach has included elements in this movement that emphasize this ability, such as the manner in which the *da capo* is introduced, with the soloist free to lead the way. Based on its evocative nature despite the degree of difficulty and elaboration, Whittaker describes this movement as “one of the most extraordinary arias the composer ever wrote.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Durr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 18.

<sup>50</sup> Whittaker, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 571.



## THE RECITATIVES (MOVEMENTS 2 & 5)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...”

John 1:14

While the two recitatives in this work have their obvious stylistic differences as completely different types of recitative, these movements (the second and fifth) share examples of the composer’s attitudes toward text setting in this broader genre of solo vocal music. In both the freer *secco* recitative and the metrical *accompagnato* recitative, the composer shows inclination toward a natural text rhythm, with attention to key words that might be emphasized by a good orator—particularly those of thematic import that may connect to the other movements. In both movements the composer has set particular words and phrases in the text with much care. The two movements will be discussed separately.

### The Tenor Recitative (Movement 2)

*Das Wort ward Fleisch* (The Word became flesh), the second movement tenor recitative, is based on the concepts outlined in the first verses of the gospel of John. These verses refer in abstract terms to the theological concept of the incarnation of Christ. In particular, the first four lines of the text are concerned with this concept. This is clearly appropriate for the celebration of Christmas for which this cantata was composed, but it is important to note that there are allusions to Christ’s death in these words as well. As John Butt writes, “one of the central points of John’s gospel is the view of Christ as divine from the start, and that his resurrection and victory are all preordained, the mechanical means by which we achieve salvation.”<sup>51</sup> In this light, we see the significance of the second part of the text, the final four lines that exhort the congregation to “think about this exchange” [bedenkt doch diesen Tausch].

*Das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnt in der Welt,  
Das Licht der Welt bestrahlt den Kreis der Erden,  
Der grosse Gottessohn  
Verlässt des Himmels Thron,  
Und seiner Majestät gefällt,  
Ein kleines Menschenkind zu werden.  
Bedenkt doch diesen Tausch, wer nur gedenken kann:  
Der König wird ein Untertan,  
Der Herr erscheint als ein Knecht  
Und wird dem menschlichen Geschlecht  
—O süßes Wort in aller Ohren!—  
Zu Trost und Heil geboren.*

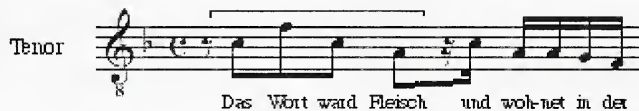
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<sup>51</sup> Butt, “Bach’s Vocal Scoring”: 105.



The Word became flesh and came into the world,  
 The light of the world illuminates the circle of the earth,  
 The great Son of God  
 Forsakes the throne of heaven,  
 And it pleases his majesty  
 To become a little human child.  
 Think, then, about this exchange, whoever can think:  
 The King becomes a subject,  
 The Lord appears as a slave,  
 And for the human race  
 —O sweet word in every ear!—  
 Is born to be their comfort and salvation.

Bach has set the text, as is generally the case for recitative, sequentially and without repetition. For a text concerned with the paradox of Christ as God and man, he has used a contrast of vocal ranges on certain words to parallel their textual symbolism. The first two nouns in the text, “Wort” and “Fleisch” respectively, are set as the highest and lowest notes in this first clause, emphasizing their contrasting nature: the exalted “Word” [Wort] becomes the lowly “flesh” [Fleisch] (ex. 13).



Ex. 13: Mvt. 2, m. 1, tenor

Throughout this movement, texts referring to the contrast of the heavenly and the earthly use upward leaps followed by downward motion. This occurs in shorter phrases, as at the beginning (ex. 13), and in parts of longer phrases which show the same overall motion. For example, in mm. 4–7, on the text “der grosse Gottessohn verlässt des Himmels Thron, und seiner Majestät gefällt, ein kleines Menschenkind zu werden” (“The great Son of God forsakes the throne of heaven, and it pleases his majesty to become a little human child”), the three highest notes of the long phrase are the first syllables of each of “Gottessohn”, “Himmels” and “Majestät”,<sup>52</sup> and the whole phrase ranges from those highest notes down to a C3 at the end of “Menschenkind zu werden.” Again, when setting the words “der König wird ein Untertan” (“the King becomes a subject”), he begins with an upward leap on “König”, then descending to “Untertan”. A similar treatment occurs in mm. 11–12, on the text “der Herr erscheint als ein Knecht” (the Lord appears as a

<sup>52</sup> An A4, G4 and G4 respectively.



slave), beginning with a leap up to F4 on “Herr”, in a statement separated by rests from the previous and following material, and descending to Eb3 on “Knecht” (ex. 14).



Ex. 14: Mvt. 2, mm. 11–12, tenor

Other, more abstract varieties of word-painting present themselves. On the phrase “Das Licht der Welt bestrahlt den Kreis der Erden” (“The light of the world illuminates the circle of the earth”), the tenor soloist is given an ascending 16<sup>th</sup> note passage on the word “bestrahlt” (perhaps indicating a “lighting-up” effect), which is then echoed in the continuo. The singer is also given upward motion when the text refers to “thinking” about the mysteries of the incarnation, in two places: on “bedenkt” in m. 8 and “gedenken” in m. 9 (ex. 15), perhaps identifying the word “think” with a physical motion of looking upward:



Ex. 15: Mvt. 2, mm. 8–10, tenor

### The Alto Recitative (Movement 5)

The poetry of the fifth movement is less obviously drawn from any one biblical source. The words refer to the biblical account of the Fall of Man, when Adam and Eve, tempted by the serpent (representing the devil) committed the first sin. It is a comforting text, referring to the coming of Christ (and again by inference, the death of Christ) alleviating the “poison” [Gift] in the soul of the “grieving sinner” [betrübter Sünder].

*Die Schlange, so im Paradis  
Auf alle Adamskinder  
Das Gift der Seelen fallen liess,  
Bringt uns nicht mehr Gefahr;  
Des Weibes Samen stellt sich dar,  
Der Heiland ist ins Fleisch gekommen  
Und hat ihr allen Gift benommen.  
Drum sei getrost! betrübter Sünder.*





The serpent, that in paradise  
 On all Adam's children  
 Let fall the poison of the soul,  
 Brings us no more danger;  
 The woman's seed makes itself present,  
 The Saviour has come in the flesh,  
 And has taken all the poison away.  
 Therefore be comforted, grieving sinner!

The poetry, while less free in its construction than that of the second movement, is not in an entirely regular meter, though the syllabic accent is consistently iambic. Notable is the end rhyme, with the second and final lines standing separately. The way in which particularly the final line stands separately in the poetry is paralleled in Bach's setting, as will be discussed below. As in the tenor recitative, the text is set entirely sequentially and without any repetitions.

Bach has set this movement as an *accompagnato* recitative for solo alto with the strings and no winds. The basso continuo plays a simple, punctuating role until the very end, supplying major harmonic shifts with single chords that give basic grounding and moments of intermittent warmth to the texture. The lack of constant bass gives a sensation of weightlessness as the melody floats within the harmonic framework in the strings. The vocal line is less disjunct with more predictable harmonic flow than in the second movement, typical of the *accompagnato* style. There are some exceptions to this harmonic predictability, however: for example, in the second phrase of text, the word "Gift" ("poison") is set on a G flat against an A diminished chord in the strings with nothing in the bass, a jarring dissonance to evoke the sense of this word. The true high point in this movement is found in the harmonic content of the final three measures (ex. 16):

The image shows a musical score for measures 9-11 of a movement. The score is for five parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Alto, and Basso Continuo. The Alto part has lyrics: "tuost! be - tueb - - - - - ter Suen - der." The Basso Continuo part has a simple, punctuating role. The score is in G minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. The measures are numbered 9, 10, and 11. The Alto part has a melodic line with a long note in measure 10. The Basso Continuo part has a simple, punctuating role.

Ex. 16: Mvt. 5, mm. 9–11, full score



Immediately preceding this example, in m.8, there is a perfect cadence in C minor, suggesting finality. It finishes with the idiomatic descending leap of a fourth in the vocal line, followed by a perfect cadence in the accompaniment. The final word of the text there concludes a series of three groups of rhyme:

“Paradies/fallen liess...Gefahr/sich dar... gekommen/benommen.” Thematically, too, the point has been made: The serpent can no longer harm us, and the poison has been “taken away.” So the last three measures appear as an addendum: “Drum sei getrost! betrübter Sünder.” (Therefore be comforted, grieving sinner!) The harmony used here is very rich and brims over with tension on “betrübter” (grieving) before melting away into a perfect cadence on B flat major. Bach uses a pedal point in the voice to create this tension (leaping to D flat as the third of B flat minor, which then becomes the minor seventh of E flat), followed by a chromatic cambiata figure over an E flat pedal point in the bass to approach the final resolution to B flat in the voice (finishing, again, with the idiomatic descending leap of a fourth). The cadence is retarded by a chromatic rising line in the bass approaching the final dominant chord, which then resolves with a perfect cadence to B flat major (see ex. 16).

In the first recitative, Bach uses compositional devices to create contrasts paralleling the paradoxical theme of the text: Christ as both God and man. In the second recitative, he uses melodic and harmonic relationships to create contrasts between the pain caused by sin and the devil and the comfort offered by Christ. While there are major differences between these two styles of recitative, we can see that in both of these movements, the composer’s goal is an evocative expression of the text.



## THE CHORALES (MOVEMENTS 3, 6, & 8)

“Next to theology, only music is able to afford interior peace and joy...[The devil] takes flight at the sound of music, just as he does at the words of theology, and for this reason the prophets always combined theology and music, the teaching of truth and the chanting of psalms and hymns.”<sup>53</sup>

Martin Luther

Bach has included three chorale movements in this cantata, serving as the third, sixth and eighth movements. The chorale movements are re-harmonizations of stanzas of pre-existing hymns, as was typical of the composer. The three chorale texts come from three separate sources:

Two of the three chorale movements are based on Christmas hymns: the text of number 3 is the third verse of the hymn *Wir Christenleut* by Caspar Füger (1592); that of number 8, the fourth verse of the hymn *Freuet euch, ihr Christen alle* by Christian Keymann (1653). Number 6 [is] the second verse of Paul Gerhardt’s hymn *Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott* (1653).<sup>54</sup>

These chorales deliver a large amount of text in a few bars of music, and therefore have a great impact on shaping the work thematically. They comment on the subject matter of the surrounding movements and address the congregation more directly. This is particularly the case in the first two of the three chorales, which comment on the relationship of Christ and the devil, and of the congregation and the devil; the final chorale is less thematically linked to the other movements and more forward-looking in the New Year’s theme of the holiday for which this cantata was written. In all three chorales, the composer has indicated that the vocal parts are to be doubled by the instruments, and the instrumental assignments to vocal parts are the same in each of these movements, as follows: soprano with first violin and oboe and first horn,<sup>55</sup> alto with second violin and oboe, tenor with viola, and bass with the continuo basses. The keyboard player(s) accompany in thorough-bass style.

In Bach’s harmonizations of these pre-existing melodies, a number of common elements can be seen. The first, seen particularly in the first two of the three chorales, is an interest in giving evocative musical material to accompaniment parts in order to emphasize particular words or phrases. The second

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in translation by Stevenson, “Bach’s Religious Environment,” (The Journal of Religion Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1950)): 248.

<sup>54</sup> Dürr, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*: 109. The full texts, including all verses, of the hymns here referenced can be found through [www.gesangbuch.org](http://www.gesangbuch.org).

<sup>55</sup> While this paper is not intended to be a discussion of performance practice, the assignment of these instrumental doublings bears some discussion for the benefit of the potential performer. The horn for which this piece was conceived was much more capable of lightness and flexibility in the high range than are our modern horns. Even with very good players, there are likely to be balance issues involved with the assignment of the first horn (or both horns (!) as indicated in the Hänssler score) to the soprano part of the chorales. A number of options present themselves, including re-assigning the horns to doubling other vocal parts in the chorales and placing the horns well back of the rest of the vocal-instrumental ensemble in performance. In the absence of very good horn players, which one needs to accomplish this work even without considering the chorales, the editors of the Hänssler edition of this piece recommend substitution of trumpet or flugelhorn (the latter of which might be a good compromise between the flexibility and range of the trumpet and the warmer sound of the horn), and have supplied parts for this purpose.



common element is a stronger adherence, in the phrasing suggested by the harmony, to the text as spoken rather than as written.

### Die Sünd macht Leid (Movement 3)

Textually, the first chorale in this cantata addresses the relationship of the worshippers to the subject matter addressed in the previous two movements: the coming of Christ, defeat of the devil, and resultant liberation of believers. The congregation is exhorted to remember that it is through trust in Christ that the believer gains freedom and comfort from the harm of sin.

*Die Sünd macht Leid;  
Christus bringt Freud,  
weil er zu Trost in diese Welt ist kommen.  
Mit uns ist Gott  
nun in der Not:  
wer ist, der uns als Christen kann verdammen?*

Sin causes pain;  
Christ brings joy,  
Since he has come into this world for our comfort.  
God is with us  
Now in our need:  
Who is there that can condemn us as Christians?

Füger's text is clearly divided into two sections by punctuation, meter and rhyme. Metrically, the poetry fits into a regular pattern, 4-4-11, 4-4-11 as syllables and in a consistent iambic rhythm, truncated to end on an unaccented syllable in the two long lines. The rhyme scheme parallels the meter, AAB CCB. The chorale melody sets the text in a straightforward way, with one exception: the repetition of the first line (in this stanza, the text "die Sünd macht Leid"), which adds a measure to the first phrase. Excluding the first line, each short line in the poetry is assigned a single measure of the chorale tune, with the long lines given three measures, each syllable of text given a single beat throughout. With the addition of the repetition of the first line, the result is an 11-measure, 3+3+2+3 phrase structure.

The repetition of the first line of text obviously emphasizes this line, but more importantly, it changes the metrical balance suggested by the text as it stands, making the final climactic phrase (ex. 17) come sooner than is expected. Bach has added to this effect by placing constant eighth notes in one or both of the inner voices in only this line, giving a sense of increased harmonic/rhythmic tempo toward the final word "verdammen" ("condemn"), which the tenors emphasize by leaping a sixth up to an E4 on the





accented syllable, descending smoothly into the cadence. This melodic descent to the cadence, in all parts in this case, is a practice typical of Bach for final cadences on an unaccented syllable, aiding the singer in producing the text in the manner of speech rather than accenting what would sometimes be a stronger beat in the measure.

Soprano Alto

Mit uns ist Gott nun in der Not wer ist der uns als Chri-sten-kann-ver-damm-men?

Tenor Bass

Ex. 17: Mvt. 3, mm. 6–11, SATB

### Schüttle deinen Kopf (Movement 6)

The sixth movement, the second chorale setting in this work, addresses the congregation more directly, beginning with the imperative: “Schüttle deinen kopf und sprich” (Shake your head and say), the remainder of the stanza being addressed to the serpent:

*Schüttle deinen Kopf und sprich:  
Fleuch, du alte Schlange!  
Was erneurst du deinen Stich,  
Machst mir angst und bange?  
Ist dir doch der Kopfzerknickt,  
Und ich bin durchs Leiden  
Meines Heilands dir entrückt  
In den Saal der Freuden.*

Shake your head and say:  
“Flee, you old serpent!  
Why do you renew your sting,  
Making me fearful and anxious?  
Now your head is truly crushed,  
And I am, through the suffering  
Of my Saviour, taken from you  
Into the Hall of Joys.”

The poetry here is set in four couplets, each consisting of a line of trochaic tetrameter (seven syllables, the last foot truncated with no unaccented syllable) followed by a line of trochaic trimeter (six syllables).

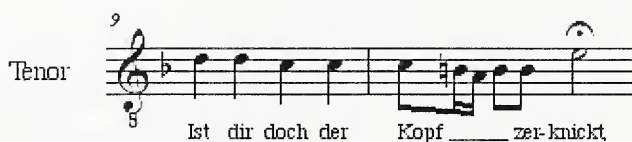
Gerhardt’s rhyme scheme again suggests a division at the halfway point: ABAB CDCD.



Johann Crüger, the composer of the original melody,<sup>56</sup> has set the text in a straightforward manner, rhythmically speaking. Each metrically parallel line of poetry is set to metrically parallel music. The total length of 16 measures divides into four, four-measure groupings each corresponding to a single couplet, with each line within the couplet given two measures. Each syllable is given a single beat, with the exception of the final accented syllable of each line, which is given two beats, contributing to the emphasis on this syllable, and allowing for elaboration in the lower voice parts in Bach's setting.

Against this balanced rhythmic approach, however, Bach has chosen to follow the punctuation of the text when it comes to grouping the shorter two-measure phrases into longer musical phrases in the second half of the stanza. There is punctuation following the fifth line, with no punctuation in the remaining three lines until the end. By combining this punctuation with the musical setting of pair of words ("Kopf zerknickt") that are quasi-onomatopoeic in sung German, Bach eschews a balanced 4+4 measure approach, creating a two-measure phrase followed by a final phrase of six measures. This provides extra accent to the text of "Kopf zerknickt" and provides drive to the end, where we are received into "the Hall of Joys" [den Saal der Freuden].

The music given to the text of "ist dir doch der Kopf zerknickt" is of interest, as Bach here increases the rhythmic and harmonic motion by introducing constant moving eighth notes (this time in the bass), beginning on "ist dir doch...". This leads to "Kopf zerknickt," where the tenors have a figure that gives power to this text, with all of its plosive consonants, quick motion on "Kopf", and leap to E4, relatively high in the range (ex. 18):



Ex. 18: Mvt. 6, mm. 9–10, tenor

<sup>56</sup> [www.gesangbuch.org](http://www.gesangbuch.org)



## Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder (Movement 8)

The final chorale, addressed to Christ himself on behalf of all those gathered, is a simple hymn. It looks forward to the new year, and “sums up John’s vision of the glorified Christ bringing unending ‘joy’ and ‘bliss’ to the world.”<sup>57</sup>

*Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder  
Ferner in Genaden an;  
Schenke, was man bitten kann,  
Zu erquicken deine Brüder:  
Gib der ganzen Christenschar  
Frieden und ein selges Jahr!  
Freude, Freude über Freude!  
Christus wehret allem Leide.  
Wonne, Wonne über Wonne!  
Er ist die Genadensonne.*

Jesus, take your members  
Further in your mercy;  
Grant what can be asked for  
To refresh your brothers:  
Give the Christian flock  
Peace and a blessed year!  
Joy, joy upon joy!  
Christ protects from all suffering.  
Delight, delight upon delight!  
He is the Sun of Mercy.

The meter of the poetry is trochaic, again truncated so that the lines with odd numbers of syllables end with an accented beat. The stanza can be broken down by rhyme scheme and meter into three sections: the first four lines (ABBA, 8-7-7-8), followed by lines five and six as a couplet (CC, 7-7), then the final four lines (DDEE, 8-8-8-8).

While there are no particular devices used here to express specific words as in the same manner of the other chorales, there is similar attention to the overall logic of the text. Again, Bach sets the text in a rhythmic manner that exactly parallels a reading of the text as poetry. Each syllable in the text is given a single beat, with the exception of the final syllable of those lines that are metrically truncated to end with an accented syllable; these syllables are given two un-subdivided beats.

This text, however, even as it stands, is much different when spoken than the manner in which it is grouped by rhyme and meter. The composer, while rhythmically following the meter of Keymann’s poetry and the melodic structure he received, defers in his phrasing and hierarchy of cadences to the more logical,

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<sup>57</sup> Gardiner, *Bach Cantatas* Vol. 14, 2005: Sleeve notes.



spoken form of the text. Rather than breaking the phrase between lines four and five, he groups the fourth line with the following couplet in his phrasing. He also makes a clear division between the first two lines and the third, rather than connecting through this passage as the meter of the poetry suggests. The final four lines of text are parallel structurally, in two, two-line groups, and Bach sets these lines in a way that recognizes this, with a cadence after the third-last line that parallels the final cadence.

In each of these chorales, within the simple structure of his raw material, Bach has made use of selected compositional devices to ensure a performance of the music with attention to the meaning of the text. This comes in the form of particular harmonization or rhythmic devices that bring a particular word or group of words to life, but also is visible in the manner in which he has grouped the rhymed and metered poetry into phrases by his harmonization—to give priority to the text’s meaning and delivery.





## CONCLUSION

Performing and writing about Bach's BWV 40 has been a great source of enjoyment and insight into the composer's style. Particularly the task of writing has led to increased appreciation for this cantata and its composer. Preparation and performance of this work is sure to be at least equally rewarding for any conductor or group of performers. In its length and degree of variety and difficulty, it is very suitable for a high-level amateur group including chamber chorus, soloists and instrumentalists, particularly if good horn players and a capable tenor soloist are available. Particularly its significant volume of choral material makes it worth the devotion of a choir's effort. Its inclusion of a wide variety of styles within Bach's vocal and choral writing (a choral fugue, *secco* and *accompagnato* recitatives, chorales and two aria forms) make it perhaps an interesting point of entry into this body of repertoire for a studying conductor. Whittaker has written that

[BWV 40] is one of the most perfect cantatas, every number being of superb quality, and is truly representative both of the composer's religious outlook and of his supreme inventive and imaginative powers, not the Cantor in his official position, but the real man, passionate in his spiritual fervour, believing in the personal activity of the Evil One and in the all-conquering might of the Saviour.<sup>58</sup>

While liturgical in origins, and overtly Christian in content, its dramatic treatment of good and evil and consistently high quality of composition make it a cantata that will interest any audience when performed with authenticity of expression.

It is hoped that the preceding discussion of the text as source material for composition, comparing the content and form of the text to that of the music, and discussion of the phrase structure and textural relationships in the work will be helpful to a person preparing it for performance. For example, familiarity with the contrasts of motivic elements in the first movement, the phrase structures in the arias, the harmonic and textual elements in the recitatives, and the text-phrase relationships in the chorales should help mold the preparation of this cantata. Hopefully the points of interest given attention here will interest the potential conductor in bringing these aspects to life, and enable such a person to explore further such aspects that contribute to a gratifying performance of Bach's BWV 40 and other works.

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<sup>58</sup> Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach: Sacred and Secular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959): 566



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## **APPENDIX A: DETAILS OF BACH'S BWV 40**

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

*Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes*, BWV 40

**SATB choir, A, T and B soloists**

**Violin 1 & 2**

**Viola**

**Oboe 1 and 2**

**Corno 1 and 2**

**Basso Continuo**

**Duration: ca. 18 min.<sup>59</sup>**

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<sup>59</sup> As per Kubik's footnote indication in the Hänssler score.





**I. Coro**

**SATB, Vln 1 & 2, Vla, Ob. 1&2, Cn. 1&2, Basso Continuo**

*Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, dass er die Werke des Teufels zerstöre.*

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (I John 3:8)

**II. Recitativo**

**T, Basso Continuo**

*Das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnet in der Welt,  
Das Licht der Welt bestrahlt den Kreis der Erden,  
Der grosse Gottessohn  
Verlässt des Himmels Thron,  
Und seiner Majestät gefällt,  
Ein kleines Menschenkind zu werden.  
Bedenkt doch diesen Tausch, wer nur gedenken kann:  
Der König wird ein Untertan,  
Der Herr erscheint als ein Knecht  
Und wird dem menschlichen Geschlecht  
—O süßes Wort in aller Ohren!—  
Zu Trost und Heil geboren.*

The Word became flesh and came into the world,  
The light of the world illuminates the circle of the earth,  
The great Son of God  
Forsakes the throne of heaven,  
And it pleases his majesty  
To become a little human child.  
Think, then, about this exchange, whoever can think:  
The King becomes a subject,  
The Lord appears as a slave,  
And for the human race  
—O sweet word in every ear!—  
Is born to be their comfort and salvation.

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<sup>60</sup> I have used Alfred Dürr's division of the poetry into lines, as his book uses the texts drawn from the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*, of which he served as an editor. The English biblical text is taken from the Authorized Version (1611). For the other English texts, I have consulted Dürr, the sleeve notes from the recording by Bach Collegium Japan (translations by William Jewson), and Francis Browne (translations posted on the "Bach Cantatas" website).



### III. SATB

*Die Sünd macht Leid;  
Christus bringt Freud,  
weil er zu Trost in diese Welt ist kommen.  
Mit uns ist Gott  
nun in der Not:  
wer ist, der uns als Christen kann verdammen?*

Sin causes pain;  
Christ brings joy,  
Since he has come into this world for our comfort.  
God is with us  
Now in our need:  
Who is there that can condemn us as Christians?

### IV. B, Vln 1&2, Vla, Ob. 1&2, Basso Continuo

*Höllische Schlange,  
Wird dir nicht bange?  
Der dir den Kopf als ein Sieger zerknickt,  
Ist nun geboren,  
Und die verloren  
Werden mit ewigen Frieden beglückt.*

Hellish Serpent,  
Are you not afraid?  
The one who as a victor crushes your head  
Has now been born,  
And the lost  
Will be made happy with everlasting peace.

### V. *Recitativo* A, Vln 1&2, Vla, Basso Continuo

*Die Schlange, so im Paradis  
Auf alle Adamskinder  
Das Gift der Seelen fallen liess,  
Bringt uns nicht mehr Gefahr;  
Des Weibes Samen stellt sich dar,  
Der Heiland ist ins Fleisch gekommen  
Und hat ihr allen Gift benommen.  
Dum sei getrost! betrübter Sünder.*

The serpent, that in paradise  
On all Adam's children  
Let fall the poison of the soul,  
Brings us no more danger;  
The woman's seed makes itself present,  
The Saviour has come in the flesh,  
And has taken all the poison away.  
Therefore be comforted, grieving sinner!



**VI.  
SATB**

*Schüttle deinen Kopf und sprich:  
Fleuch, du alte Schlange!  
Was erneurst du deinen Stich,  
Machst mir angst und bange?  
Ist dir doch der Kopf zerknickt,  
Und ich bin durchs Leiden  
Meines Heilands dir entrückt  
In den Saal der Freuden.*

Shake your head and say:  
“Flee, you old serpent!  
Why do you renew your sting,  
Making me fearful and anxious?  
Now your head is truly crushed,  
And I am, through the suffering  
Of my Saviour, taken from you  
Into the Hall of Joys.”

**VII.  
T, Ob. 1&2, Cn. 1&2, Basso Continuo**

*Christenkinder, freuet euch!  
Wütet schon das Höllenreich,  
Will euch Satans Grimm erschrecken:  
Jesus, der erretten kann,  
Nimmt sich seiner Küchlein an  
Und will sie mit Flügeln decken.*

Children of Christ, rejoice!  
The kingdom of hell now rages,  
Satan's fury wants to frighten you:  
Jesus, who can rescue you,  
Takes care of his little chicks,  
And wants to cover them with his wings.

**VIII.  
SATB**

*Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder  
Ferner in Genaden an;  
Schenke, was man bitten kann,  
Zu erquicken deine Brüder:  
Gib der ganzen Christenschar  
Frieden und ein selges Jahr!  
Freude, Freude über Freude!  
Christus wehret allem Leide.  
Wonne, Wonne über Wonne!  
Er ist die Genadensonne.*

Jesus, take your members  
Further in your mercy;  
Grant what can be asked for  
To refresh your brothers:  
Give the Christian flock  
Peace and a blessed year!  
Joy, joy upon joy!  
Christ protects from all suffering.  
Delight, delight upon delight!  
He is the Sun of Mercy.















